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ABSTRACT

The views of three parliamentary librarians and two academics on the subject of library services to Australian legislators are given in this publication. A variety of viewpoints is given in order to stimulate and provoke reaction from the Members of Parliament for whom the book is basically intended. The five articles included are: (1) "The New South Wales Parliamentary Library: its present and its future," (2) "Legislative Research Service: the view from Canberra," (3) "The Queensland Parliamentary Library," (4) "Legislative reference and research services for the Australian Parliaments," and (5) "The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library." (Author/NH)

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THE VITAL ADJUNCT

Parliamentary libraries and their role in Australia.

Reference Monograph No. 7

Sydney

N.S.W. Parliamentary Library

1969

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Can any good be expected of parliamentary libraries? The story is told of the world famous library consultant who visited a large State parliamentary library and afterwards had an interview with that State's Premier. Asked by the Premier for his opinion of the parliamentary library the eminent authority replied adroitly: "Well Sir, it is of course a parliamentary library." It is all too true that for many years the Australian parliamentary libraries had not been anything other than mere parliamentary libraries, that is to say, no better than they should have been. Still, just as a good thing did come out of Nazareth so it is equally possible for the Australian parliamentary libraries nowadays to surprise and confound even the most scathing critic of their earlier performance. Parliamentary libraries no longer require apologists, for, perhaps more than most libraries, they are conducting rigorous self-examination and undertaking services and activities which place them in the vanguard of Australian library progress. Does that indeed add up to much, it may be asked? It is perhaps not fitting for a parliamentary librarian speaking in causa sua to reply, but if the interested observer compares the parliamentary libraries at different points of time in their existence it is apparent that changes have taken place and that their users now entertain a certain respect for their efforts. The pages of the various Hansards contain abundant evidence in this regard. It is, however, in their constant seeking for new ways to serve Members of Parliament, in their readiness to be innovators and in their commitment to personalised service that parliamentary libraries may lay

claim to new vitality, that is, to a capacity for growth and development. If they continue to experience what might be termed "creative unrest" they will at least escape the opprobrium of being "mere parliamentary libraries".

The present publication brings together the views of three parliamentary librarians and of two academics on the subject of library services to our legislatures. A variety of viewpoints is provided and it is hoped that this variety will both stimulate and provoke reaction from our users, the Members of Parliament for whom this book is basically intended. The respective parliamentary libraries are ultimately dependent for their flourishing on the support and active encouragement of their Members who, as probably the most articulate sector of society, can express their needs and ideas with force and effect.

Communication between library and Member remains of paramount importance and is the key to the continuing effectiveness of parliamentary libraries. But not only is it necessary for Members to speak with their libraries: they must also speak on their behalf when the need arises, but only if they believe their libraries are worth speaking for. I trust that the articles published here will demonstrate to Members that their own vital interests are involved in the creation and maintenance of dynamic and responsive library services. To create such services requires the co-operation, enthusiasm and application of librarians and Members.

R. L. Cope
November, 1969.

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The New South Wales Parliamentary Library: Its Present and Its Future

by R.L. Cope.

The libraries of the various State Parliaments have only recently begun to make any significant impact on their patrons and it is clear that they have found it very difficult to cast off the outmoded ideals and the sometimes deadening legacies of their Victorian origins. The larger parliamentary libraries early amassed substantial and valuable collections reflecting the culture, tastes and traditions of a leisure class and they long continued to cling to these traditions which have now ceased to be relevant to the needs of legislators in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result the progress generally observed this century in the development of Australian libraries by-passed the parliamentary libraries and the caustic criticisms of them made in 1947 by the eminent English library expert Lionel McColvin were probably not undeserved. It is indeed significant that the overall contribution of the parliamentary libraries to Australian librarianship has been slight when one considers their long history, the rich collections they possess and the privileges and advantages they have enjoyed.

A new spirit, however, now permeates the Australian parliamentary libraries and the stagnation once typical of them has disappeared. No longer is it true to say that the parliamentary libraries reflect a

vanished era: their efforts are now devoted to responding to the challenges of the present and to identifying themselves with the eminently social needs of the institution they serve. Turning to the New South Wales Parliamentary Library one may say that it has only achieved any momentum in progress since a specific role was assigned to it by the Joint Library Committee and since the Library's efforts were given a specific direction and goal.

The role now assigned to us is based on the recognition of the Parliamentary Library as a service organ to an extremely complex social institution and our work can only be properly performed if we understand the nature of the Parliament of New South Wales. A conscious assessment of the library and information needs of the Parliament and its Members has thus been made and in this regard our role must be defined in <u>functional</u> rather than in substantive terms. In functional terms, because we should be above all responsive to the changing nature of a Legislature which itself changes according to sociological and political developments. No more are we to reflect a given state of culture (be it that of 1969 or 1869): our specific characteristic is to be that of responsiveness, and this implies the ability and willingness to change direction as required. We must stand or fall by the quality of the positive services we provide to Members collectively and also as individuals. Our services must take into consideration the smallness of our clientele (154 Members, and the officers of the

Parliament), the heterogeneity of this clientele's level and quality of need, the social function of the Parliamentary institution and finally our claims of library professionalism. In all these considerations it is paramount that practical experience remain the touchstone of theory and that dogmatism be avoided as far as possible. A readiness to experiment should not be foreign to the Parliamentary Library.

If the Library remains responsive to the individual needs and demands of Members its vitality will be ensured. But in the long view it may well become necessary to go beyond responsiveness which implies that the stimulus to act comes from outside it. As an agency collecting and processing a wide range of information and current discussion on social and political developments it is desirable that of all libraries the Parliamentary Library should not only house this material but also understand and absorb it into its intellectual awareness. The Library should use its privileged position as a recipient of current information in order to foresee evolving patterns of need for information among its Members; it should reach out to Members with information on questions currently or inevitably of concern to Members before they are as individuals perhaps aware of the latest trends. The Library should anticipate and ultimately aim to foster such service needs. A dynamic library service should articulate the still unconscious needs of its Members.

In November 1968 the Parliament approved

Resolutions governing the Library and its services. These Resolutions mark the full emergence of the New South Wales Parliamentary Library into the twentieth century, since it had continued to operate until then under Resolutions passed in 1862. Of the new Resolutions no. 4 states: "The principal functions of the Parliamentary Library shall include the provision of flexible reference and research services specifically designed to meet the needs of Honourable Members in the performance of their Parliamentary duties." And Resolution no. 5 reads: "The Parliamentary Library shall maintain collections and a staff of qualified librarians adequate to meet the research and information needs of the Legislature ..." These two Resolutions clearly set out the functions expected of us. Concurrent with the discussions which culminated in the passing of these Resolutions a detailed survey of the Parliamentary Library was undertaken on the recommendation of the Joint Library Committee. The Presiding Officers arranged for a team of three, consisting of the Parliamentary Librarian, the Deputy Principal Librarian of the Library of New South Wales and an officer of the Public Service Board to examine what staff and changes might be necessary in order to perform the functions set out in the Resolutions. In tackling these questions the survey team were faced with defining the type of staff needed to meet the wide range of Members' needs, particularly with regard to research work to be carried out for them. The necessity of having staff at once competent to run a large, complex and expanding library and able at the same time to win and enjoy the respect

of Members seeking reliable and specialised research assistance was clearly seen and the problem of how to achieve all this with a relatively small staff received close attention. With the emphasis now given to the information and research needs of members - "specifically designed to meet the needs" as Resolution 4 puts it - it is obvious that unless we can satisfy these in a manner better than any other avenues which may be available to Members, the Library will soon cease to merit any support and will have no justification for its separate existence. The discussion in these Reports may be perused by those interested but it will be sufficient for present purposes to point out that the Parliamentary Library has this year reorganised its staff and has altered the physical layout of the Main Reading Room in order to increase its performance in this critical area of its activities.

A special staff of four officers forms the Library's Reference and Research Section, and of these one officer is assigned to doing research for Members. All inquiries come to these four officers who must demonstrate versatility and general awareness of a high order. The Library records all inquiries received and divides them into three categories: reference, advanced reference and research. The smallness of our staff does not yet allow us to undertake much in the way of research, particularly when it is recalled that research involves creation of new knowledge, not merely a gathering together of existing information from scattered sources. Whilst this Section does not turn away business it is sometimes necessary to hold jobs

over until staff time becomes free. Generally speaking, however, Members leave very little time in which their jobs can be completed and in session the Reference and Research Section is extremely busy meeting close deadlines. In this regard our service suffers both from the unusual pressures of parliamentary life and to a lesser degree from the lack of self-organisation by Members who may fail to realise that in some cases it is necessary to go beyond our immediate resources in order to do justice to their needs.

It is not only necessary for our reference officers to meet the deadlines of Members, they must also be able to satisfy the individual requirements of these Members. It is in this respect that our services should be "specifically designed to meet the needs" of our Members. The accent on personalised service must be pronounced and our Reference staff endeavour to indicate that they identify themselves as much as possible with the personal concern of the Member in the job in hand. In many cases a rewarding degree of intimacy and mutual confidence is established. Our service is hence not just a service for Members but a service for individuals who are Members. The Library staff must study and know their Members, they must be familiar with their background, requirements and, if possible, with the use to which material compiled by us has been or will be put. We regularly check Hansard and note where material prepared by us is used. Instances where Members get several organisations, including the Parliamentary Library, to work on the same project have come to our

notice and it is our hope that the performance of the Reference and Research Section has encouraged the Member to return with a fuller confidence in our desire and ability to serve. The ultimate criterion of any parliamentary library will be, of course, the quality of its work done to meet the unusual needs of parliamentarians, and to do this speed and adaptability will always be necessary on the part of reference officers. Much remains for us to deepen our personalised contact and this is an obvious problem requiring close study.

Even presuming that the library staff can satisfy the requirements outlined above, there still remains much to be done before one can claim that the New South Wales Parliamentary Library has developed to its full potential. The desire and ability of the staff to serve the wide field of Members' interests are dependent not only on the staff's library expertise, their general level of education and political awareness, but also on their substantive knowledge. Particularly in a library environment such as ours the need for subject competence is strongly felt. It is to be greatly regretted that the New South Wales Parliamentary Library is deficient in this regard and at present there seems little hope of redressing this. No member of the Reference and Research Section is expert or particularly versed in any specific subject or study which would assist our Members. Whilst all parliamentary library officers should be generally versatile it is also extremely desirable to be able to draw on an accompanying pool of expertise or competence in various

areas (e.g. parliamentary history, procedure, problems of the civil service etc.). It is scarcely feasible for the State parliamentary libraries to aim to emulate the sophisticated development of specialist services offered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library which is able to attract specialists and acknowledged practitioners of standing in particular subject fields. Still, the New South Wales Parliamentary Library should aim to do more to foster subject competence and if any expansion of its Reference Section takes place the promotion of subject competence should have high priority.

What is envisaged here is to assign to individual officers (if possible on a voluntary basis) the general superintendence of some particular field (e.g. New South Wales Railways) with which the officer should make himself fully familiar. All material received relating to this field should find its way to him and should be indexed by him and brought to the notice of his colleagues where necessary. He should point out deficiencies in our information sources and above all he should be encouraged to establish a personal (but not private) liaison with officers of the Department. He should be encouraged to visit the Department to establish such contacts. It is indeed very desirable for the creation of as many outside contacts as possible by all officers, yet in reality it is scarcely ever possible for staff to leave the Library for any period. No Library officer has ever participated in any of the conferences, seminars or meetings held in Sydney on subjects of concern to the

Library's function as a provider of current information. With present pressures it is in fact not easy to have meetings of the Reference and Research Section in order to discuss ideas and evaluate progress.

A further advantage to come from encouraging subject competence would be a higher standard in answering Members' inquiries in the specific subject fields. Whilst all officers should be able to undertake reference work on any topic - this is after all one of the criteria of library professionalism in reference work - it is more rational and economical for a division of labour to be created and for certain officers to undertake reference and research work in specific fields. This is of course only feasible once the staff has the size to warrant such diversification: the need is already apparent. An additional benefit of subject competence would be the production of digests of current developments, background notes, bibliographies and reference monographs on subjects of concern to Members of both Houses and which would be an out-of-session responsibility of these officers. The Library has already made some progress in publishing reference monographs and their success has been gratifying. But our ability to continue to produce them has diminished because of the greater day to day demand of Members for general reference work.

There seems little doubt that Members would welcome access to officers who are skilled in understanding public finance, statistics and legal questions.

The New South Wales Parliamentary Library can scarcely be said to possess such officers and this is a further argument in favour of subject competence. Were the Library to enable suitable officers to gain qualifications and experience in some of these fields the advantages to us could be very great. The problems involved are correspondingly great but certainly not insuperable. A modest beginning could be made by arranging for an officer to spend a short period working e.g. in a legal library or spending a week at the Bureau of Census and Statistics. The pursuit of full formal qualifications would be most desirable but even the acquisition of partial qualifications would be welcome. This too is a goal for the future. It is illusory to hope that the State Parliamentary Library will ever be able to exploit the abilities of a George B. Galloway or a W. Brooke Graves, both eminent political experts in the United States and both long employed by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress.

All reports prepared for Members are filed by us and kept for as long as seems necessary. Neither time nor labour has been available for us to do much with these reports, either by way of culling or updating. These reports are filed in classified order and distinct clusters of recurring subjects are thus formed. We have not been able to use the knowledge that certain subjects are of recurring interest to our Members with any degree of success: we should aim at updating such material regularly and issuing a digest

of latest developments periodically. We should be putting greater efforts into expanding these files by placing in them such things as annual reports, newspaper clippings, extracts etc. and thus making them an indispensable and current reference source. As it is we await a request for a Member of the subject involved and consult the index to see what has been previously prepared: it is then necessary to update and often to traverse ground covered by an officer on the earlier occasion.

Since comparative legislation is always of special concern to Members in debate we should organise ourselves to deal with this type of need much better than we have done. Although the New South Wales Parliamentary Library receives a wide range of Bills and Acts from other legislatures and lists them in numerical order, very little else has been done with them because of the smallness of our staff. We should subject index and, indeed, publish a semi-annual bulletin of legislative developments in this country: such a publication would be of inestimable value to Members, particularly if it is presented in the form most useful to them (i.e. by giving references to the reasons for such legislation being brought down, by providing Hansard references and by indicating any similar legislation passed elsewhere or whether any legislation represents an innovation or experiment etc.). Such a bulletin would absorb quite an amount of staff time both in its compilation and actual typing, but it would seem to be a service proper for a legislative

library to undertake. Certainly it would represent one means whereby the New South Wales Parliamentary Library could anticipate and prepare for the needs of its Members by reaching out to them instead of waiting for them to come to us.

The New South Wales Parliamentary Library keeps a close check on announcements concerning the government's intention to introduce new legislation. The announcements are filed and indexed, and we have issued several Projected Legislation Newsletters. We are not yet able to do much towards preparing briefings on the proposed Bills and all too often we find that our resources on technical matters are slight or out of date. Ideally we should have an officer constantly working on background briefs concerning new Bills.

One of the most controversial political developments of the present in Australia is the direction being taken by our federal system. All Members are aware of, and concerned by, this and their requests for information continue to grow. These requests, however, represent a multiplicity of fragments and on this question above all it should be the function of the Parliamentary Library to present a coherent, documented and comprehensive briefing of the history and problems of our federal system. We cannot do this without a larger staff and better facilities. There is an inevitable frustration flowing from the recognition of the need and the inability to meet it.

The problems that face the State parliamentary libraries are legion and perhaps none is greater than the difficulty confronting their librarians when they wish to stand back as it were from their libraries and assess their performance and meditate on solutions to their problems. The heavy day to day involvement of small staffs trying to give their best does not leave much room for other activities. Another great and related problem is that of planning. The importance of forward planning - be it to prepare material for a conference, debate, or be it to draw up plans for new library services or publications - will scarcely be questioned, but once again this is an aspect of our work in which we do not perform well enough. None of these desirable developments can take place unless financial support and more staff are provided.

Parliamentary libraries are undeniably adjuncts to their legislatures: the question is, how vital are they? The continuing use to which Members of the New South Wales Parliament put their Library suggests that our parliamentarians recognise the Library's usefulness. To the extent that we live up to our desire to give personalised services and to establish a community of interest with our Members, the Library displays vitality. It has been the aim of the present contribution not only to indicate that we possess some vitality, but also that a potential for greater vitality lies ready to be exploited. This can, however, only come to pass if Members themselves desire this and are ready to press and to act for it. Our future is in your hands.

Legislative Research Service: the View from Canberra

by Professor L.F. Crisp,
Professor of Political
Science, Australian
National University.

Parliamentarians are professionals - professional politicians, or at least professional representatives. Like other professionals, they are presumed to have, at entry, appropriate - or at least widely acceptable - qualifications as representatives. But, like doctors and lawyers, they will attain general eminence or specialist standing in their chosen profession (at once as representatives and as Parliamentarians) only as they gain further education, training and skill "on the job". Like other professionals, too, they need various aides and underpinnings in their day-to-day activities. As the doctor looks to the pharmacist, the radiologist, the journal-articles and reference books, in meeting demands upon him, so, inside and outside Parliament House, the Member will prosper and progress in his profession to the extent that he knows how to find and to use the various sorts of assistance available to him. Outside, his supporters and party organisation will supply some of this assistance. So will a good secretary. Inside the Parliamentary institution itself, practical experience, learning from the precepts and practice of his peers and conscientious committee work can all do much to make a better Parliamentarian and even a possible

Minister of him. Learning to exploit the resources of a Legislative Research Service, and then making full and regular use of it, are no less important. All such factors should be seen as inter-related for his purposes and capable of being so used as to reinforce each other.

A Legislative Research Service can, of course, be welcomed for itself and judged purely by and for itself. It is much better seen as <u>one amongst other</u> available underpinnings to the efforts of conscientious Members seeking to equip and extend themselves in their chosen profession. It is perhaps best of all seen as one of a complex of instruments making it possible for the Parliamentary institution <u>as a whole</u> to operate at peak effectiveness over the entire area of its proper functions - and especially in its supreme functions as a balancing and countervailing force <u>vis-a-vis</u> the Executive.

A Legislative Research Service can be thought of as - and usually is in historical fact - an extension of an existing Parliamentary Library by the provision of an appropriately educated and trained team of intermediaries between the Members and the Library's traditional primary and secondary source materials. The rôle of the team is to pinpoint, collate and integrate material the Members more or less specifically ask for but are either insufficiently equipped, or too busy, or both, to find, evaluate, relate and work up for themselves. Such a function, even in isolation, is indispensable if the modern Member is to get by with

credit, let alone shine, in an age of complex technicalities in so many of the ever-growing number of subjects of governmental - and hence of Parliamentary - concern. A Legislative Research Service represents, then, a reinforcement to or transformation of traditional library reference services to a particular clientele, Parliamentarians-in-action.

The belatedly-established but lately-burgeoning Legislative Research Service of the National Parliament at Canberra can be viewed in itself or in its wider context. Introduced in June 1966, in a tentative, experimental way, in the face of scepticism or indifference on the part of some Members, it is by no means fully developed. The intention of Parliament is to develop it in stages, allowing growing demand to determine each advance. It is, in February 1969, apparently not yet fully staffed to its recently-approved, second-stage establishment. It is also very short of space.

What are the attitudes now of Honorable Members? Most are not hesitant about giving their own views: those more closely interested will offer estimates of usage. Not all are yet fully seized - or, in some cases, seized at all - with the potentialities of the Legislative Research Service for them, or knowledgeable about utilising its potential. Members' estimates of its present utilisation are significant to a political scientist. Whilst about 30 per cent. of Members are reckoned to make plentiful use of it, another 30 per cent. apparently use it little, if at

all. The remainder make "some" use of it. Those who say they make, or are said to make, little use of it include, however, some Members whose education and training have equipped them to do their own digging and preparation effectively, with the help of the traditional reference library facilities of the Parliament. Some of this group of Members have past associations in, say, universities which still enable them to draw knowledgeably on research and even researchers in such institutions. Significantly, some of the newer Ministers, on the other hand, who as Private Members had early learnt to tap the Legislative Research Service, are said by Backbenchers or colleagues to have continued to make some use of it even after coming to command Departmental resources. To an outsider, this seems perhaps a little unfair.

In another direction, members of specialist policy committees of one or other parliamentary party own to having learnt the value of, say, consulting a Legislative Research Service officer informally over a meal about the problems on which their committees are concerned to find leads and sources of information. Members speak with appreciation of the strictly confidential basis upon which their enquiries are made, and are met by the Legislative Research Service. No Member is told what help another has sought, or supplied with a copy of the material supplied to another Member. This element of strict confidentiality seems to have done as much as any other factor to establish general Parliamentary confidence in the new Service.

Such achievements and tendencies, recorded in so short a time, must be most encouraging to those responsible for the Legislative Research Service. Naturally, friends of Parliament would like to see 100 per cent. of Private Members avidly using the Service and insisting on its further development. But political scientists, at least, accept the fact that not all Members will ever work that way. Some make equally necessary, telling (and sometimes more vivid) contributions from their fresh, passionate, personal insights based on first-hand contact with the grim or gay everyday developments in this or that aspect of national life and, in so doing, they also help to make Parliament a cross-section or microcosm of the nation.

It is, incidentally, not without significance that Legislative Research Service officers, who might conceivably become as cynical as do some Australian newspapers, in fact record a sense even of mild astonishment at finding so many Members so tremendously and sincerely keen to make solid contributions, to clean up anomalies and grievances, to improve by statutory amendment or by informed criticism the legislative bases of Australia's current era of rapid development. Happy should be the Parliamentarians who are even qualified heroes to their intellectual valets!

With an establishment of a dozen or so graduate officers, the Legislative Research Service of the National Parliament is currently divided for operational purposes into four teams, broadly corresponding with certain reasonably logical groupings

of executive Departments. Thus a Trade, Industry and Finance team covers references corresponding with most of the fields of the Departments of the Treasury, Trade, Primary Industry and National Development. A Foreign Affairs, Defence and Technology team, a Social Welfare team, and a predictably busy Statistics team "confront", as it were, other groupings of Departments.[1.]

Whilst some Members have begun to press for one, there is as yet no team, trained in the law, available for handling legal and constitutional references.[2.] In a Parliament where the Ministry monopolises the direction of the activities of the "Parliamentary" Draftsman and his staff, there would seem to be a particularly strong case for a distinct

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1. Cf. the American Congressional Legislative Reference Service with (by 1965) 156 research specialists, backed by 63 clerical and administrative staff, to service 535 members of the two Houses. Additionally, some 35 Congressional committees had their own staffs, including investigation and research men. (The Congressional Reorganisation Act, 1946, allowed each Committee a four-member research staff and six clerks.) Even allowing for the differences in the populations and wealth of the two countries, and for the very different legislative processes and functions of the two legislatures, the U.S. arrangements constitute in many ways a splendid model for Canberra parliamentary reformers to carry always in mind.

2. In 1965 the American Law Division of the U.S. Congressional Legislative Reference Service had 24 professional and 13 clerical staff members. This is apart from the Legislative Drafting Bureaux of the two Houses, organised under the Office of the Legislative Counsel.

small team of lawyers, within or alongside the Legislative Research Service, available quite independently of the Ministry or the Parliamentary Draftsman (and confidentially) to Private Members and, perhaps, also to Parliamentary select committees.

The Senate, at least, has recently decided to reap the benefits of an extended and a better serviced committee system. Members of the Senate Select Committee on Off-Shore Petroleum Resources admit to having absorbed for some months a good half of the working capacity and time of the first scientist recruited to the Legislative Research Service's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Technology team. Significantly, the Senate itself is now recruiting six officers qualified to give research and other assistance to its select committees. Undoubtedly the early promise of the Legislative Research Service has been amongst the factors influencing this Senate staffing development. Both, at any rate, may be regarded as symptoms of a trend - a trend which friends of Parliament hail as a crucial one in the direction of "better Parliament".

One of the most exciting areas of speculation about the permanent Parliament House in Canberra, which may yet come to be in our lifetime, is what form the new Parliamentary Library layout should and will take within it. There seems every reason to believe that the Legislative Research Service has yet room to make a considerably greater regular impact on Members individually and on Parliament. In addition, electronic and other devices make it highly probable that the

Parliamentary Library and its Legislative Research Service could be connected by teleprinter, or by computer consoles, with data-banks at such institutions as C.S.I.R.O. and the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, as well as with computerised national bibliographical and informational centres and major libraries around the nation. If these developments are to occur, any traditional lay-out of the Parliamentary Library would be "old hat". The Library Committee of the National Parliament, served by a staff already interested in technological possibilities, will have one of the first opportunities anywhere in the world to have designed from the very beginning a new lay-out appropriate to the new age of Library technology and focussed at least in part on the primacy of the Legislative Research Service approach to Library-exploitation by Parliamentarians.

Mention of various possibilities in the last two paragraphs takes us back, of course, to my opening point: the Legislative Research Service is ultimately but one element in the development (in some directions rather belated in the case of the National Parliament) of a whole range of facilities, procedures and services, familiar overseas, which can make for "better Parliament". By this last phrase we mean better performance of its entire rôle by a Parliament drawing the very best out of the procedural opportunities of both Houses, out of a properly articulated committee system, and out of individual Members gently and persuasively brought to appreciate that they can add cubits to their individual and collective statures by

developing and exploiting the services of Parliament, of which a forward-looking Legislative Research Service, appropriately intellectually and technologically equipped, will not be the least.

The Queensland Parliamentary Library

by S.G. Gunthorpe,
Parliamentary Librarian.

Historical

Following the proclamation of Queensland as a separate colony of Australia on the 10th December, 1859, the first meeting of Parliament took place on May, 1860. Until the present buildings were occupied in 1868, its operations were carried out in a converted barracks building in Queen Street, Brisbane.

The necessity of having a library as an essential part of parliamentary service was early recognized, for in the week following the opening of Parliament, Mr. Ratcliffe Pring successfully moved in the Legislative Assembly "That a Library Committee be appointed for the present Session to consist of Mr. Gore, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Herbert, Mr. Pring and Mr. Moffatt with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any Committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council". The Speaker was added to the Committee in June 1860. On the 19th June 1860, Mr. Pring brought up a report from the above Committee with reference to the formation of a Parliamentary Library requesting a Conference with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council, in order that the subject might be fully considered. A conference was accordingly held in the Legislative Council Chamber on the 13th June, 1860. The following resolutions were agreed to by the Library Committees of the respective Houses:

(1) That the necessary steps be taken, without delay, to obtain the sanction of Parliament to the expenditure of a sum of one thousand pounds for the foundation of a Joint Library.

(2) That further steps be taken to secure the annual appropriation of a sum of £300 towards keeping up the same.

(3) That the Committee prepare a Progress Report of this day's proceedings, embodying the above Resolutions to be laid on the Table of the House.

This report was ordered to be printed, and the money duly placed on the estimates. Thus began the Queensland Parliamentary Library one month after the first meeting of Parliament, and four years earlier than the publication of a Hansard. It is interesting to note that the British practice of having separate libraries for the House of Lords and House of Commons was not followed. The Library therefore became a common meeting-place for Members of both Houses, and occupied a central position in the new building.

The first recorded minutes of the Library Committee, 24th July 1860, show that the two committees had merged into a Joint Library Committee, for the President of the Legislative Council (Hon. Sir Charles Nicholson) and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Hon. Gilbert Eliott) were both present. One of its first tasks was to write to the House of Commons, and the parliaments of South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania for a set of their journals and papers, thus early emphasizing the value of comparative information.

It appears that the Usher of the Black Rod (Col. C.G. Gray) combined the duties of his office with those of Librarian, but in May 1861 a request was made for an Assistant Librarian. The popularity or usefulness of the library seems to have been assured at the outset. In July 1861 it was to be open every day of the week, excepting Sunday, from 10a.m. till 4p.m. and on Friday from 9a.m. till 4p.m. and at all times during sittings of either House. The combination of duties obviously proving too great for one man, a full-time librarian, Rev. J.R. Moffatt, M.A. was appointed Parliamentary Librarian as from Aug. 1, 1861 "on the condition that he forthwith resigns all other appointments and duties except those which may be performed on Sundays". Rev. Moffatt was formerly Chaplain of H.M. Gaol and Rector of Kangaroo Point Church of England.

Apart from a copy of May's Parliamentary Practice, the first order for books was received from Messrs. Mangles & Co. of London, and in 1862 the Librarian presented to the Committee "an alphabetical catalogue of books at present in the Library, including the books in the City of Brisbane shortly expected". This must surely be the first occasion in Australia that books were catalogued before their receipt. At all events, the Committee authorised 150

copies of the catalogue to be printed, and resolved "that the shelves be numbered and that corresponding numbers be entered in the margin of the catalogue". In 1863, the Committee requested from the Colonial Secretary the sum of £150 for the purchase of Gould's Birds and Mammalia of Australia, but this was disallowed. It tried to obtain this set on two further occasions but had to be content with Diggles' Birds of Australia. Had the set been purchased, it would today be worth at least $6000.

The new building was not yet erected, and the Librarian reported the "want of proper sitting accommodation". He also unsuccessfully tried to obtain for himself, in accordance with usage of other colonial parliaments, quarters in the new building.

When the Library moved to the new building in 1868, a major tragedy occurred, for in 1869 the Committee decided that, except for the Times, Sydney Morning Herald and Brisbane Courier, all old files of newspapers, many of which were of Queensland origin, should be sold or otherwise disposed of, as their bulk had become considerable. Some of these are now extinct.

As Parliamentary Librarian, Rev. Moffatt appears to have had a difficult time in these formative years; or, more probably, could not adapt himself to the situation. It is obvious, from the remarks of his successor, that everything was in disarray. He contracted a malady, which caused his suspension from office on the 5th May 1874. The position was advertised, and Denis O'Donovan was selected, although there was considerable opposition to his appointment. A group of Members wanted an ex-Member T.P. Pugh to get the job, and claimed that the President of the Council and the Speaker had selected O'Donovan without the sanction of the Library Committee. However, after much unpleasantness, he commenced duties on August 1st, 1874.

He was a scholar of no mean order, and through his industry and capable administration the Library prospered. Although not having trained as a librarian, he had the good sense not to invent cataloguing or classification methods, but studied comprehensively the literature available, and adapted it to the special needs of the Library. While his cataloguing was meticulous, it is unfortunate he chose to arrange the books by fixed location rather than adopt Dewey's decimal classification.

He was aware of it, but decided that a comprehensive analytical catalogue of the collection was of more practical value. And so he set himself with vigour to the task of compiling a printed dictionary catalogue of the collection. His first catalogue entitled Analytical and classified catalogue of the Library of the Queensland Parliament was published in 1883. This was the forerunner of his monumental three-volume catalogue published 1899-1900. Only those who know the difficulties associated with cataloguing can appreciate the immense amount of time and industry expended in such a work. It is little wonder that it received world-wide commendation, for it is one of the best examples of a printed catalogue produced. Some might sneer at the detailed analytical cataloguing of articles in periodicals, encyclopaedias and the like, but the object of his cataloguing was to unlock as much of the information as quickly as possible, speed in finding information being the keynote of work in a parliamentary library. Moreover, because of his detailed cataloguing, the catalogue is still of considerable value in research.

During his period of office, the books selected were for the most part of a useful and literary nature. Fiction, except the classical kind, was not bought. Circulating libraries were flourishing and were supposed to cater for the lighter side of reading. Fortunately, too, he preserved at least some of the pamphlet and newspaper material of the period. When in 1902 he retired after twenty-eight years in office, it was decided to replace him by some competent person, after the President and Speaker had conferred with the Premier.

Unfortunately, the state of the Treasury was giving some concern at the turn of the century, causing a drastic reduction in the Vote for the Library, with consequent cancellations, and general tightening-up on expenditure. John Murray, who was O'Donovan's chief assistant became Acting Librarian and continued in this capacity for five years. He was appointed Librarian in 1907. Although he had been for a long time under the tutelage of O'Donovan, he does not seem to have acquired any knowledge of librarianship. He brought out a printed list of publications received up to 1908, but it is not a catalogue in any way comparable with that produced by O'Donovan.

The high standard reached at the turn of the century was not maintained. There was no cataloguing or classification of the literature, the selection of the books was not in keeping with the function of the library, and generally the administration was not along principles of librarianship already established. Murray retired in 1929, and he was succeeded by Harry Worthington. It was not until D.V. Ryan was appointed in 1947 that any attempt was made to place the Library on a sound basis. By this time, of course, a great back-log of work had become necessary, much of it still not done. Ryan established a dictionary card catalogue, and adopted the Dewey classification. He resigned in 1952, and I commenced duty as Parliamentary Librarian in December 1952.

Present Position

It is surely a truism, but one sometimes lost sight of, that when a library is established its predominant function should be kept constantly in mind. Whatever by-products there may be, a library must be so organized as to fulfil the purpose for which it was established, and few libraries have a more clear function than those serving legislatures. This function is to assist Members of Parliament in their very important duties by providing literature and information likely to be of benefit to them. Because of the nature of their collections, parliamentary libraries are also used by the agencies of Government, the judiciary and scholars seeking information not readily available elsewhere.

Organization

From 1860 to the abolition of the Legislative Council in 1922, the Library was administered by a Joint Library Committee, with the President of the Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly being the chief Members. From that time it has been a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. Under Standing Order no. 330, a Committee of seven members is appointed at the beginning of every Parliament to manage the Library. Similar committees are appointed for the management of the Refreshment Rooms, and Parliamentary Building. On these committees, the governing party selects the majority of Members, and four constitute a quorum. The Speaker is Chairman.

The Parliamentary Librarian is Secretary to the Library Committee and is responsible to it for the

administration of the Library. He reports annually to its Members, the report being tabled by the Speaker, but not as yet ordered to be printed. It therefore does not appear as a Parliamentary Paper. Except where some problem of magnitude or controversy occurs, for example the purchase of a photo-copying machine, the Library Committee does not meet, and is content to leave the management to the Speaker and Librarian. This is a far better arrangement than in the years gone by, when the Librarian could not even by any books or periodicals unless they were approved by the Library Committee. Of course, there is a Suggestion Book, and any Member of Parliament is at liberty to make recommendations for the purchase of any item.

Whether the Committee's resolutions are carried out or not depends to a large extent on the harmony existing between the Premier and the Speaker. In the past, there has been, unfortunately, an idea that the position of Speaker was just a stepping-stone to Cabinet rank, instead of being regarded as one of the most important offices a politican can hold. This has sometimes led to domination of the parliamentary sphere by the Executive, with consequent ill effect on the administration of the services to Parliament. But this attitude is no longer in evidence.

The Library receives an annual vote for salaries and the purchase of books, periodicals, binding and other essential materials. During 1968/69 it was $29,515 for salaries, and $6,800 for other expenditure. It can hardly be said today, as was reported in 1930, that parliamentary libraries are among the favoured libraries of Australia. A close watch on the expenditure has to be maintained to ensure that over-spending in any particular category does not take place. But with the progressive increase in the price of books and periodicals and the demand for better service, the vote is unrealistic at the present time. All accounts are certified by the Parliamentary Librarian before being passed for payment by the central office in the Clerk's Department.

Accepted library procedures are used wherever possible, and sometimes adapted to reduce the work-load. For example, before a book is ordered for purchase, every endeavour is made to locate it in one of the published national bibliographies. When it is received, the order card becomes the cataloguing process slip and

finally serves as the shelf-list record. Most of the material being received, either by purchase, donation or under statutory deposit, is catalogued, and classified under the Dewey system. But there are many thousands of books acquired before 1947 for which only a manuscript author list exists. Priority in cataloguing treatment is given to books published in Queensland or Australia, and frequent analytical cataloguing of these is undertaken. Where references to articles in magazines, bulletins, etc. are of practical value, these are typed on a separate subject references card which is filed at the end of the catalogue cards listing that subject. All other subjects, for example, dealt with by Current Affairs Bulletins are treated in this manner. The aim is to put into the catalogue as much useful and current specific subject information as possible, for speed is the essence of our work. Nearly all serials are checked-in, payments recorded, and binding record made on Roneo visible file cards designed for the purpose. Except where convenience demands otherwise, serial publications are kept in a separately classified sequence, the latest issues being readily available and back issues in store. Because of their constant use, bills, statutes and parliamentary papers emanating from Australia or New Zealand are indexed on cards to assist in their quick retrieval.

Resources

Although no physical count has been made for many years, the Library is estimated to contain 98,000 volumes. Being the oldest library in the State, it has acquired over the years many valuable sets of periodicals, newspapers, parliamentary papers and statutes. Indeed, many of the books and pamphlets are now of considerable monetary and historical value. Subject coverage is not all-embracing. But its strength is in the wide field of the social sciences, with biography and history being well represented. In recent years there has been a marked growth in the number and subject range of serial publications - bulletins, reports, periodicals and similar publications of indefinite duration. At the present time 1150 different titles are being received either by purchase, donation or statutory deposit. The Library has been a copyright deposit library for Queensland publications since 1887.

Services

The public image, often promoted by newspapers, of a Member of Parliament as a highly-paid individual whose work only entails an occasional speech in Parliament is quite erroneous, and has done much to damage the very concept of parliamentary democracy. Most Members today are fully occupied with electorate, parliamentary or party duties. Indeed, it is to be regretted that more of their time could not be devoted to their parliamentary function. Gone are the leisurely days when Parliament was regarded as a superior gentleman's club, for not only is the party to which a Member belongs watching its representative but the informed electorate who put him there is also scrutinising his performance. It follows, then, that Members of Parliament are busy men who do not have leisure to read heavy tomes in the hope of finding the information for themselves; it must be found for them, and within the time required.

In the modern parliamentary library, service to its clientele is the cornerstone of its work. The kind of service given can vitally affect the community. If information provided does not specifically or accurately satisfy the inquiry received, or is not obtained in time for it to be used effectively, the consequences may be very considerable.

The concept of a Legislative Reference Service as the focal avenue of a parliamentary library through which information is channelled to Members of Parliament is sound. Even the great Library of Congress found it necessary to set up within its administration such a department. But such a specialist section can only be achieved where the staff is large enough to allocate persons to implement it. And, even then, its strength or weakness depends largely on all the other activities in the library being performed efficiently.

At the present time in the Queensland Parliamentary Library, reference and research services are done by staff who have other tasks in addition. As the staff increases, so will the adequacy of its reference function. It may be asked what type of inquiry is received. This is best answered by the manual of the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress - "almost anything may be asked for". In other words the range of governmental activity is

so pervasive today, that breadth of subject coverage is as important in a parliamentary library as a large research library. However, in Queensland, (and no doubt in other States) inquiries received are most often in connection with the constitutional responsibilities of the State, or those of other countries having comparable problems. It follows that the selection of material to supply this information is geared to this emphasis. As a guide to the nature of inquiries, the following recent examples are set out:

How long have Credit Unions been established in Queensland?

Who were the Electoral Commissioners for the 1958 State redistribution?

What is the voting age in different countries of the world?

When was the world's first off-shore oil well drilled and where?

What is the adress of the SIERRA club in U.S.A.?

How are Institutes of Technology constituted in other Australian States?

What have you on income tax provisions in West Germany?

History of Fraser Island.

What are the national days of the member nations of the United Nations, and why?

History of Chambers of Commerce in Australia.

While service to Members is of paramount importance, the Library is often called upon to assist the agencies of government, research workers and the public. It is estimated that thirty per cent of the service given is for this purpose. The Library plays its part in the community.

With the growth of the modern newspaper, it has become a major source of public information, criticism or

praise. Members of Parliament, probably due to their insecurity of office, are more sensitive today to the opinions expressed by newspapers than they were fifty years ago. To provide topical subject information of a political nature, a Newspaper Clippings File is kept. Each day two main daily newspapers - the Courier-Mail and the Australian are scanned for subjects of interest. These are clipped, mounted on backing sheets, and arranged under appropriate subject headings, in vertical filing cabinets. It frequently happens that Members wishing to survey the clippings on a particular subject, say the sugar industry, find ideas for speeches from them. If required,they may be copied or the file borrowed on short term loan. This service has been in operation since 1957. The culled subject files contain a most interesting record of events since then. If space and staff were available, the service could be extended to advantage to include more newspapers, especially those printed in Queensland. During 1968/69 more than 3000 clippings were preserved.

Starting in 1957 with a "Contoura" photo-copying machine, Copying Facilities are available free of charge to Members if the copying required is connected with their electorate or parliamentary duty. A charge of five cents per page is made for other copying. A Xerox 914 electrostatic copier is at present in use, and in 1968/69 37,747 copies were made. The cost of copying is not now borne by the Library because all departments of the Parliament use it.

The Future

With the rapid technological developments taking place in the field of communication it is difficult to predict what shape the library of the future will take. Techniques required to process, store and retrieve information will change drastically, even for smaller libraries. But I would predict that the printed word will continue to hold its traditional value as a means of communication for many years to come. Libraries will still be concerned primarily with books and printed matter.

What then should the policy be for a parliamentary library? It should have accommodation for staff, stock and equipment adequate and suitable for its purpose. In Queensland, one of the principal handicaps in providing good service has been the unsuitability of the accommodation.

But plans are being prepared to remedy this, not only for the Library, but also for Parliament as a whole. Because of the changes likely to take place in the techniques of library administration, it follows that any plan for the library should be flexible in nature.

The present methods of cataloguing, indexing and conducting reference research will have to continue until these can be done electronically at a reasonable cost. But as better means become available, they should be adopted. Anything that can be done, without loss of efficiency, to reduce the time spent on the preparation of the material so that more time may be given to its use, will be of benefit.

Libraries of the future will not work in isolation as they largely have done in the past. Co-operative storage of books, computer-based catalogues, closed-circuit transmission of information are all possible developments in the next twenty years. Because of their important function, parliamentary libraries will have to co-operate in these schemes, provided they increase the efficiency of their services.

Legislative Reference and Research Services for the Australian Parliaments.

by Professor G.S. Reid,
Department of Politics,
University of Western Australia.

The main problem in assessing the need, type and extent of legislative reference and research services for Australian Parliaments is the degree of uncertainty, even confusion, about the role of Parliament in Australian governments. With seven separate Parliaments in the Australian federation, and, with the exception of Queensland, all of them bicameral institutions it will obviously be very difficult to state categorically what legislative reference and research services we appropriate to the needs of modern M.P.'s. In the first place we are not clear on what the role of M.P.'s should be. And secondly, that role is likely to vary from Parliament to Parliament.

However, in spite of the differences between the roles of M.P.'s, one basic generalisation is possible. Parliaments in Australia - federal and state - are established in accordance with the provisions of written constitutions. Each constitution, however vague, provides the respective Parliament with one, and only one, formal function. Every Parliament is constitutionally vested with "the legislative power" of the state. Section I of the Federal Constitution, for example, states that "the legislative power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a Federal Parliament". It is significant that almost every other reference to Parliament in the respective constitutions is supplementary to that fundamental provision. The financial powers of Parliament (the taxing as well as the spending powers), the policy-making powers of the respective Houses, each House's right of initiative, the resolution of inter-House conflicts, are incidental to the Parliament's legislative power.

If we take the "legislative power" to be basic to the operation of every Australian Parliamentary institution, then we will have to acknowledge that in the last century there have been several important developments in the use of that power.

In the first place, all the Parliaments have delegated a large part of their legislative power to the executive. In particular acts of Parliament, Ministers and officials, in the name of the Governor-General (or the Governor) have been authorised to promulgate statutory rules, orders, by-laws and regulations - known collectively as "subordinate legislation".

Secondly, some of the respective Parliaments (The Commonwealth, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales) have established means for maintaining, through a committee, a surveillance over the use by Ministers and officials of the subordinate legislative power delegated to them.

Thirdly, more and more of the legislative proposals introduced into the Parliament have been initiated by the executive Ministers, and, contrariwise, less and less now comes from individual M.P.'s.

Fourthly, there have been increasing demands, and a marked willingness on the part of Parliamentarians to agree, that it is not the function of the members of Parliament to attempt to modify the details of legislation. Members of Parliament have shown a decreasing interest in exercising their power "to make laws"; they apparently see their role to be simply to approve, or reject, or refrain from approving, laws which are, in effect, made by others.

Fifthly, no Parliament in Australia has seen fit to establish a system of standing committees for the closer and detailed consideration of proposed laws, or for the determination of a law's content.

And, sixthly, financial legislation once the means of "Parliamentary control of finance" is now used simply as the opportunity for instituting annually recurring wide-ranging and discursive debates on general matters of topical interest.

What then may a legislative research and reference service provide for a modern Parliament in the context of all of these trends? If the Parliament is no longer a "legislature", is the "legislative" component of such a service fast becoming redundant?

There are two ways of answering these questions. One may accept the judgment that the trends, as given, are

the facts of the situation, and then contemplate the needs of M.P.'s in these new circumstances. Or, alternatively, one may demonstrate dissatisfaction with the trends and advocate appropriate changes.

From the point of view of the first answer, it can be said that in existing circumstances in law-making, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the Parliamentary trends mentioned above, there remain large areas of public policy-making where a legislative research and reference service could make a valuable contribution. If Parliamentarians continue to delegate their legislative power to executive Ministers, and also make provision to maintain a surveillance over its exercise, the fields of interest involved in that surveillance are as wide as the legislative powers of the Parliament itself. In existing conditions, Parliamentarians frequently need research help, both for the making of a decision to delegate power to executive Ministers; and, more particularly, they need help to make effective their continuous watch over the use of that power. And, if the means of surveillance is per medium of a Parliamentary committee, then the existence of that committee heightens, not lessens, Parliamentarians' need for information.

And notwithstanding the decline in the number of bills sponsored by private members in contemporary conditions, the output of legislation grows annually - most of it from Ministers. Although Parliamentarians are reluctant to scrutinise matters of detail, debates continue to be held on the general principles supporting each proposed law. In these circumstances the needs of members for information does not decline: in terms of volume and diversity, they increase. The range of subject material before Parliament is extensive, and it is growing. Moreover, with the debates of the Federal Parliament being broadcast, the Parliamentary forum tends now to become a continuous electoral platform. The new importance of the educative function of Parliamentary debate, particularly since the development of modern communications, makes it imperative that M.P.'s are better informed so as to make constructive and socially useful contributions. An M.P.'s lack of understanding of the legislation before him is the community's loss.

Moreover, some people, this author with them, do not subscribe to the theory that politicians should <u>not</u> meddle in the details of legislation. They will argue that such a trend has ominous implications for liberal democracy.

They will ask, who else will determine the final content of our law if it is not our elected Parliamentarians? The apparent alternatives, it seems, are public servants or relevant pressure groups. But are they acceptable? If so, which public servants and which pressure group? Who legitimately should make the final decision?

But notwithstanding the prominence given in the several constitutions in Australia to the law-making functions of Parliament, we all know that each of the respective Parliamentary institutions undertakes a variety of functions - absorbing about half their time - outside their law-making activities. These, for example, are the address-in-reply debates, urgency debates, debates on censure motions or votes of confidence, questions to Ministers, adjournment debates, grievance days, general business days, select committees of enquiry on specific topics as well as joint committees on public accounts, on public works, on privileges, committees for Parliamentary publications and all the Parliamentary committees established by statute and the like. In the course of day-to-day Parliamentary proceedings, these non-legislative activities abound; and they are time consuming. They exist, not because of any provision of the constitution, but simply because Parliamentarians in the past - in Britain as well as Australia - have established ways of doing things, and these ways have been handed on, adapted, but, more importantly, preserved.

These methods, collectively, comprise a salutary counterpoise to the authority of those who are vested with governmental power. But lacking constitutional authority for their existence, their strength and their usefulness depend very much upon the Parliamentarians themselves, - how they use them and how they preserve them.

Taking into account the variety of the non-legislative activities of Parliament, and recognising that in most Parliaments in Australia there are about a hundred or more elected members eligible to participate in those activities, members' needs for information are, therefore, multitudinous and extensive. And their needs will grow with the growth of government; they will become increasingly complex and necessary with the increasing complexity of government. To deny this is to turn a blind eye to reality. To suggest that a legislative research and reference service is unnecessary, is to condemn Parliamentary institutions to a slow and lingering death. Information is the life blood

of Parliamentary activity, and a legislative reference and research service is the necessary means for a Parliament's well-being. In the Commonwealth Parliament of recent years, so much of the newly generated activity of M.P.'s and the success of several select committees of the Senate must be related to the direct assistance rendered by the bourgeoning Legislative Reference and Research Service. It is a success, and is worthy of emulation in State Parliaments.

There is a tendency in Australia, for a variety of reasons (most of them linked with the raising and distribution of revenue), increasingly to focus attention and publicity on the Commonwealth Parliament, and also on the cabinet and political parties at the federal level. Other levels of government tend to be overlooked. But in terms of the administration of public services, and the day-to-day contact of all of us with governments, a comparable emphasis should also be directed at governments at the State and local levels. Unquestionably, decisions made at those levels have a more profound influence upon our immediate environment and our day-to-day living than those decisions of 'national' significance made at the federal level. There is a tendency for State Ministers and officials, in consequence, to escape a large degree of public scrutiny which should be their lot. Indeed, the hesitation of State Ministers towards supporting the establishment of legislative reference and research service in State Parliaments, and the lack of anything comparable to assist local governments, is indicative of the relative lack of accountability in government at those levels. Yet, problems of social and economic development abound in State politics. Increasing population, changing technology and fast-changing values affect the living of all of us. These factors make it difficult for those we elect to look after our interests in government, and to keep abreast of all that comes before them for approval. If legislative reference and research services are necessary to the modern functions of elected representatives at the federal level, they are also a logical necessity at the State and local levels. The question in each case is one of degree. But notwithstanding that, the principle must be accepted if we wish to uphold the values of representative democracy for government in Australia. Our elected representatives need to be informed, and the legislative reference and research services is the best way yet devised to achieve that end.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library

by S.L. Ryan,
Principal Librarian,
Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

If the relationship of the Library to Parliament and its responsibilities are to be properly defined then some deference to history is necessary. As early as 1903 in the infancy of the Federal Parliament the concept of a Federal Public Library was proposed with the Parliamentary Library as one of its departments.[1] It would appear that the influence of governmental institutions in the United States in shaping the structure of the Australian legislature also extended to the Library of Congress, though it is hard to say whether it was seen as a prototype of perfection or simply an obvious example worth considering. But for a time evolution of both the National Library of Australia and the Library of Congress was similar.

The Parliamentary Library was not developed to any notable extent until 1927 when the Federal Parliament transferred from Melbourne to Canberra. Then after almost thirty years the functions and purpose of the National Library of Australia were assessed by the National Library Inquiry Committee which in 1956 recommended that the two libraries should be separated.[2] Although the National Library was under the authority of the President and the Speaker the cost of its activities, most of which had nothing to do with Parliament, was borne by the Prime Minister's Department, thus creating an anomaly which was in direct conflict with the accepted principle of ministerial responsibility. Also no other Parliamentary Libraries in the British Commonwealth had extra-parliamentary responsibilities.[3] Eventually in 1967 the affiliation of the two Libraries was ended when the joint position of Parliamentary and National Librarian was abolished and separate positions created. It should be remembered, however, that there still exists a formal association between the two institutions ratified by the National Library Act 1960 in which the functions of the National Library include making its services and material available "to the Library of the Parliament". This alliance is significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, because the Parliamentary Library is a relatively small institution.*

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* The nominal collection is 40 - 50,000 monographs, and 7,000 serials including Government Publications i.e. yearbooks, quarterlies etc., and all separate governmental and United Nations series.

The amount of space occupied by it is so limited that it cannot house all the material it needs. Consequently, it relies on the National Library for a great deal of ancillary material e.g. early newspapers, peripheral monographs and serials, thereby allowing the collection of the Parliamentary Library to be identified as closely as possible with the current needs of Parliament. Secondly, stabilisation of the collection has necessitated the despatch of older volumes and little used material to the National Library.

There are five Parliamentary Departments, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Parliamentary Reporting Staff, the Library, and the Joint House Department. Although each of them is independent from the other all are responsible to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The President and the Speaker are respectively Chairman and Vice Chairman of a Standing Committee of the Library consisting of 14 Senators and Members elected for the life of each Parliament, and the purpose of which is to advise on the policy of the Parliamentary Library.

Within the context of parliamentary reform a library is consistently mentioned by its advocates as one of the instruments which will increase the effectiveness of the legislature. The PEP Report for instance on Reforming the Commons considered that "changes in and expansion of the service provided by the Library could be of equal importance to any procedural changes in the basic task of creating and restoring adequate supervision by Parliament and the activities of government".[4] Reform is necessary not because of any need to resume authority for those who see the outlines of their power dimmed by the twilight of Parliamentary decline, but because there is an important purpose to be served in doing so. It ought to be a means of infusing new ideas into Government and influencing it by means of public debate. Parliament should be seen "neither as Government, nor as its rival, but as a political communication system linking Governments to electorates".[5]

If it is accepted that Parliament is an essential element in the process of government it follows that it should properly equip itself. Its insights which will differ on occasion from those submitted by the executive will amount to little unless they are substantiated by defensible facts and arguments. But it is essential that Parliament should be able to do this in the fundamental sense of appraising organised knowledge rather than improvising on issues as circumstances present them. Such an

approach would in the view of Max Beloff have avoided the hasty responses by government to the university explosion.[6] In other words there is a "case in which a scientific ... investigation of population and economic trends could have foreseen what the problems would have been".[7] While the prediction of particular events may not be possible the consequences of social aberrations are susceptible to rational analysis. Furthermore, the short term solutions encouraged by improvisation are particularly unfortunate when it is remembered that programmes now authorised by Parliament extend beyond the normal duration of a government and well into the lifespan of their successors.[8] This need for expert assistance to parliamentarians is clearly definable. Such assistance, of course, may prove confusing, particularly if a Member of Parliament is expected to arbitrate on the conflicting opinions of experts. In such cases there is no alternative for a Member of Parliament other than to familiarise himself with the subject, the function of a Research assistant being in such instances to guide him to whatever material is relevant.[9]

Since 1966 the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library has developed a Research Service divided into groups on Defence, Foreign Affairs, Science and Technology, Education and Welfare, Economics, Statistics, and a beginning in Law and Government - the areas covered relating in a general way to the main centres of Parliamentary interest and corresponding roughly to groups of government departments.* Support for such a service came mainly from parliamentary backbenchers.[10] In the present organization, the Director of each group, as well as the Principal Librarian, is directly responsible to the Parliamentary Librarian. Senior officers of the Research Service have had extensive professional experience, but more significantly perhaps, most have had experience in government departments. There are convincing

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The Legislative Research Service was established in 1966 though it had been preceded by a Statistical Service operating through the Legislative Reference Service. In 1967 it answered 650 requests, over 1,000 in 1968 and an estimated 1,500 in 1969.

In the same period requests answered by the Reference Service increased from 1,600 to an estimated 3,800.

The total staff of the Parliamentary Library is 69 of whom 34 are professionals. (See: Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Senate 17 September 1969. p.934)

reasons why government departments are desirable sources of recruitment for at least a major proportion of the staff. The knowledge and expertise gained in an environment responsive to the issues debated in Parliament, including the practical understanding of executive processes, is of great value in preparing briefs for Members, and the association between the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library and government departments developed over a period of time is an important one. Although the policy of the Library is to rely on published or publishable information, much of it, indeed a valuable part of it, emanates from government departments. A specialist's value is dependent to some degree on his knowledge of, and access to, authoritative sources of information in his field and in this respect experience in a government department is of great help.

It must be appreciated, of course, that a legislative Library is not a conventional library as its readers are not the main users of the collection. Those who use it most intensively are the staff causing the Library to assume the character of a workshop rather than a repository. The objective is to produce information rather than preserve it or simply give access to it, which means that the staff has to accept a special responsibility for the character of the information supplied by them. The definition of research work used in this context to distinguish it from reference work, is that a research worker is responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the material produced by him either in the form of a written or verbal brief. Reference work on the other hand is assuming a new dimension with the need to integrate librarians and research specialists within established subject areas while ensuring that general information is available as rapidly as required.

Unlike the Legislative Reference Service in the United States the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library is geographically more accessible to Members of Parliament. Certainly some Congressmen see disadvantages in being so isolated from an information service and the direct submission of enquiries by them an improvement.[11] Most Members of Parliament do in fact submit their enquiries to the Library personally although many requests, of course, such as those initiated by Ministers and Party Leaders are submitted by their staff. In both cases because the Library is close not only to the two chambers but also to Members' rooms it is possible to maintain reasonably direct contact with Members. Understanding and interpretation of their requests gain from this. The danger that inevitably

confronts the Library is that it may eventually suffer from the push-button complex. Difficulties occur if it is assumed that an immediate answer to a question is forthcoming when in fact it is either unavailable, is fiftieth in a list of pressing requests, or requires a week to prepare.

The proximity of Members of Parliament means that some of the drama of Parliament is absorbed by the Library staff. A more personal response is possible though care is taken to ensure that it is not at the expense of confidentiality. One of the prerequisites of a fruitful operation is that all enquiries are treated in strict confidence, and they are not divulged to any other Member, unless permission is given, even within the same party. Politics is concerned with conflict and contention and although the Library is involved in it there is no ambition to be destroyed by it.

During the last few years the number of parliamentary committees has increased. Some of this increase is due to the renewed vitality of the Senate in which neither the government nor the opposing parties enjoy pre-eminence. Committee staffs have been enlarged and their effectiveness has to a modest extent been supplemented by the Library. Senior officers of the Research Service have supplied background papers to the committees and the Science Specialist has substantially assisted the Senate Off-shore Petroleum Committee and the Senate Air and Water Pollution Committees, by preparing briefs and attending Committee Hearings. This use of specialists by Committees is common in Parliament. The Public Accounts Committee and the Senate Regulations and Ordinance Committee for instance, both use them. But most specialists have been seconded from departments and, therefore, are not independent of the Executive. The use of a specialist from the Library follows what has become common practice in the United States, i.e. the employment by the Legislature of its own specialists and using them in Committees. This does not mean, of course, that if the system developed further here that committees would ever be as prominent as in the United States where the formal separation of the Executive and the Legislature is carried through to the committees giving them the power to initiate investigation into proposals submitted by the Executive. But it is significant that a Specialist's advice is being actively utilized in an area such as pollution where politicians have to assess the relationship of scientific achievement to public welfare.

The enquiries addressed to the Parliamentary Library theoretically embrace the whole spectrum of knowledge. Requests are received, for instance, for original texts of the Greek or Roman classics or even metaphysics, but usually the stringent time limits within which politicians operate reflect a basic pragmatism. The books that politicians use must be relevant to their needs. For this reason about 50% of the monographs borrowed from the library relate to the social sciences. Books such as Mayer's Australian Politics and Reid's The Power Struggle, are read with greater interest than the conventional best-sellers.

Enquiries may range from a simple request such as, "For how long was Dame Enid Lyons a Member of the Federal Parliament?" to a brief on, "The reasons for low prices and over-production in the world sugar industry". Since most enquiries are delivered with a deadline special facilities and services have been developed where possible to make the pressure tolerable. The most important of these is the Current Information Service which selects and organises information from newspapers, periodicals, and the federal debates. It is particularly necessary because one of the main handicaps experienced in legislative reference work in Australia is the absence of Australian newspaper indexes. Since newspapers necessarily form a substantial part of Members' reading and are, therefore, the genesis of many requests, it is essential that the information contained in them be arranged as systematically as possible. In this the Library has made considerable headway. All major Australian newspapers and two overseas newspapers are examined regularly for items relevant to Parliament, marked, cut and mounted with the appropriate bibliographical reference, supplied with a subject heading, and filed. The coverage is selective but it has several advantages:

(1) Most enquiries relating to newspapers can be answered quickly. A photo-copying machine is adjacent to the Current Information Section and articles are copied almost immediately.

(2) The Current Information Section partially overcomes the problem of newspaper indexes, already referred to, which are unavailable for Australian papers. It is not completely effective, of course, as the choice of items is selective.

(3) It obviates to some extent the need to store newspapers. As the amount of available storage space in Parliament House is extremely limited in present circumstances, files of newspapers can now only be retained for two months. Earlier issues are available from the National Library, apart from the few titles on microfilm, which are retained for use in a reader-printer. Generally the demand is for current newspapers and the results are relatively satisfactory for immediate reference enquiries though there are occasions when the lack of long runs of newspapers has proved an embarrassment.

Included with newspaper articles are bibliographies, records of important inquiries and answers to Questions. The purpose of the files in the Current Information Service is to make them a comprehensive grouping of material which has a high relevance to matters raised in Parliament. It is a system based on the judicious collation of information. Some attempt is also being made to extend this service in a positive way by sending to Members of Parliament photocopies of items in which they are interested, consistent with a subject profile submitted by them.

Complementary to the Current Information Service is a series of abstracts issued as the Current Information Service Bulletin, on Foreign Affairs, Economics and Education and Welfare. These are distributed to all Members of Parliament approximately every two or three weeks. Photocopies of articles are supplied on request and requests are numerous.

Earlier in 1969 a teleprinter service using the AAP-Reuters News Service was installed immediately outside the Library in one of the main corridors. It was hoped that it would extend the ability of the Library to anticipate enquiries and to some extent this has proved successful though it is, perhaps, less important than providing to all Members simultaneous access to printed data on major events instead of relying on rumour. Unfortunately the teleprinter was not available last November during the United States Presidential elections so that the Library had to use the combined resources of the United States Embassy, the Department of External Affairs, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Not all teleprinter items, of course, are printed in newspapers and a number of them are chosen, therefore, for inclusion in the files of the Current Information Service.

Particular attention has been given to the Current Information Service and to the teleprinter because it emphasises the methods used to circumvent the problem of finding information required in a short space of time. The cataloguing and classification of books is part of the conventional methodology of librarianship, the purpose of which is to organise a library's resources so that information can be found when it is needed. But it is an operation which is inadequate in a legislative reference service as much of the material, in terms of the demands upon it, is already touched by the shadows of history. What is required as the highest priority is the proper control of information relating to matters of current importance in public affairs. Some of this will be contained in ephemera; much of it will not be indexed in the conventional way. Obviously it is impossible within tolerable economic limits to immediately index and store <u>every</u> piece of information, but it is possible to make a judgement on the basis of previous experience of what will be required in the immediate future. This judgement will not always be accurate but it will have a high degree of probability if the person making it has the right experience and qualifications and maintains direct contact with Members' enquiries. Such experience is based not on an affinity with the occult but on the methodical acquisition of material, close attention to current debates, notice papers, editorials and the opinion of commentators, and the development of the same instinct for news as a good reporter.

The systematic collation of material so that it can be supplied immediately has proved essential in the operation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library. A strategy similar to that in the Current Information Service is also applied in the Main Reading Room. Each day items are identified which will be required that day or later that week. A random survey of the material available at the Enquiry Desk one day during the last Session disclosed that the following items were available; the Supreme Court Judgement of the Newton Case, the Mining (Bougainville Copper Agreement) Ordinance 1967, and Mr. Fairhall's press briefing concerning the U.S.-Australian Defence Space Research Facility.

In the future it is possible that computers may provide some information with greater speed and comprehensiveness than the traditional methods of librarianship. In the United States Congress this is already the case. Several bills have been introduced into Congress authorising "the use of data processing machinery to help Members of Congress obtain relevant information necessary for decision-making and

routine work".[12] A bill was passed in 1965 allowing Congress to buy automatic data processing (ADP) equipment so that some redress of the imbalance in computer resources in favour of the executive is now being attempted. This is particularly interesting because one of the suggested uses of the computers is to provide "an index of all information on file in Executive Branch data banks, which could then be tapped to provide information to Congress".[13] This suggests a rapport between the Executive and the Legislature which has hitherto proved elusive and the resulting delineation of responsibilities should indicate to what extent bureaucracies can co-operate rather than compete in achieving an acceptable objective.

It is also hoped that computers will enable congressmen to check the status of legislation. The dominance of committees, the bureaucratic labyrinths within which legislation may be concealed and the active interest of lobbies in knowing the daily progress of Bills make this a more pertinent issue in the United States than in Australia. Even if lobbies were as powerful and as sophisticated in pursuing their interests, a smaller number of Bills and a simpler committee system make the task of identifying a Bill's history comparatively easy to arrange.

Consistent with the practice of Commonwealth Departments the use of a computer in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library to control salary payments has been adopted. In fact the control of all funds including those for books and serials is now regulated by a computer through the Treasury Department. More generally in the United States, the use of computers in financial assessments by legislatures is being pursued. It was pointed out in 1966 that although Budgets were prepared by the Executive with the aid of computers no similar facilities were available to Congress when it had to review them.[14] Perhaps it is likely that computers may eventually be utilized in the Statistical Section of the Research Service of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, which is already using an electronic calculator.

In addition to the minor innovation of salary control the Library has investigated the possible application of computers to reference services in three areas; up-dating advance reference enquiries by the provision of new references, possible refinements in the Current Information Section, and indexing Hansard. Although indexing the Federal

Debates is not the responsibility of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library possible methods of improving it have been discussed with the Parliamentary Reporting Staff. But the effectiveness of computers in the reference context has not yet been substantiated. The only improvement has been indirect i.e. the introduction of a punched card circulation system which can be subsequently converted to a computer operation. Irrespective of any doubts about the current use of computers in legislative reference procedures in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library their long term application is a different issue. The recent experimental application of computers to legislative reference work in the House of Commons is a case in point. The equipment used was retained at the Culham Laboratory of the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority. The purpose of the experiment was to list selected items such as legislation, White Papers, Committee Reports, Departmental publications, newspaper articles etc, prepare a bibliographical input for the computer at Culham, and obtain a printout within a week or 10 days of the items under appropriate headings.[15] The experiment seems extremely promising, but until the time gap can be reduced the advantages offered in the control of information appear to be peripheral rather than fundamental.

It does not require much perspicacity to see that the development of a legislative research and information service is critical to the effective functioning of Parliament. The resources available to a member of Parliament are so limited that the expansion of a legislative bureaucracy to compete with the executive is inevitable. It will not be inhibited by the educational background of Members; there is nothing to suggest, for instance, that those with a tertiary education use an information service more than those without it. The demands impelling politicians to do their homework relate directly to survival, not in any pejorative sense because the same concept applies as much to virtue as to vice. But to survive politicians must know more than their competitors and be prepared to organize their resources so that they can come to terms with a political environment more complex than it is now. This is obvious enough, but what is not so obvious is the timing of the enterprise. The expansion of information services for parliament is dependent upon how much parliament is used. It is dependent on matters such as the quantity of legislation, the length of time allowed for debate and the time for which parliament sits. It is complicated by the balance of power between parties and the rewards of competence. All that the library can do in such circumstances is to ensure that it is sufficiently equipped to improve the quality of political debate as opportunities eventuate.

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Note: At the time of writing this article another article on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library by Mr. A.P. Fleming, the Parliamentary Librarian, was scheduled to appear in The Parliamentarian, November 1969.